

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT
GRASSROOTS CITIZENS FOR CHILDREN
YOUTH IN NEED FUND

The Office of the Child Advocate works with so many committed community partners, but we are especially pleased to feature a partner without whom OCA may not be in existence! Cathy Hamill and Janice Mink are co-chairs of Grassroots Citizens for Children, a non-profit child advocacy organization whose mission is to advocate for the recognition of a children as rights-bearing citizens entitled to safe, permanent families. In their efforts, Cathy and Janice are involved in many areas of child welfare, from foster care reform to kinship care. One area that Grassroots has particularly focused on in the last year is the difficulties young people face aging out of the foster care system at age 18. To help the 50 or 60 young Delawareans aging out of the foster care system each year, Grassroots began its Youth In Need Resource program. Through this program, Grassroots hopes to help people like LaToya, a teen mom working toward her GED while enrolled at Del Tech and working. Grassroots is working with other community partners to secure household items and a car for LaToya. In addition, Grassroots collects money that it donates to young people who need money for things like security deposits, electric bills and other necessities of life. Cathy notes, “When I heard LaToya speak about what she was facing & her prospects...well all I could think about was how many times my 2 oldest boys needed someone to catch them at age 19-23 and what their lives would have looked like if I hadn’t been there!”

The program has been very successful to date. Cathy explains, “We have in a sense been blessed in preaching to the choir – A number of folks have generously helped us secure funds to assist these youth. We have also had incredibly generous donations ranging from furniture to a warehouse to hold items until young people are ready to go out on their own.” However, donations are continuously needed. To make a contribution to Grassroots, visit it’s website for more information: www.grassrootsde.org.

M.C. Landis, Esq., Deputy Child Advocate has worked closely with Cathy on these issues facing young adults. M.C. notes, “In my position as Deputy Child Advocate and Chair of the Independent Living Advisory Board, I have worked closely with Grassroots Citizens for Children in Delaware for four years now. I have witnessed first hand how Grassroots’ efforts have directly benefited youth in foster care and young people graduating out of the foster care system at age 18. This population is particularly vulnerable to joblessness, homelessness and despair because as a product of “the system” they don’t possess the tools or support to succeed when they become legal adults. Grassroots, through the Youth in Need fund, has helped so many young adults as they take their first tentative steps into independence. Whether it’s a mattress, towels, rental deposits or a caring shoulder to cry on, Grassroots dedication to these young people knows no limits.”

Cathy and Janice hope that each young person aging out of foster care will have many of the same opportunities that other young people have, someone who cares about what happens to them, a job that will sustain them and a place to live where they can be safe and thrive.

**KUDOS TO GRASSROOTS CITIZENS FOR CHILDREN FOR
HELPING OUR YOUNG PEOPLE AS THEY ENTER ADULthood
AND FOR ALL IT DOES FOR OUR MOST VULNERABLE
CHILDREN!**